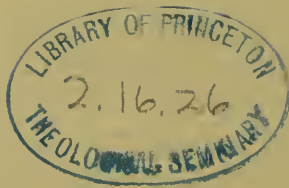


Protestant Episcopal  
Church in the U. S. A.  
House of Bishops

---

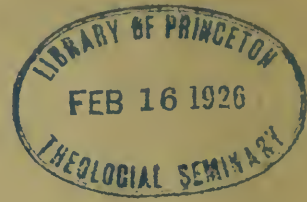
Pastoral Letter of the  
Bishops to the clergy and  
Laity A.D. 1894

BX5837  
.A2  
1894



BX5837  
.A2  
1894

Warfield Library



---

# PASTORAL LETTER

A. D. 1894

---





✓ Protestant Episcopal Ch. in the U.S.A. House of Bishops

PASTORAL LETTER  
OF  
THE BISHOPS  
TO  
THE CLERGY AND LAITY  
A. D. 1894

THE undersigned set forth this Pastoral Letter in accordance with authority committed to them by their Brethren of the Episcopate assembled in Council in the City of New York on the eighteenth day of October, being the festival of St. Luke the Evangelist, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-four.

J. WILLIAMS,  
*Bishop of Connecticut and Presiding Bishop.*

WM. CROSWELL DOANE,  
*Bishop of Albany.*

F. D. HUNTINGTON,  
*Bishop of Central New York.*

WM. E. McLAREN,  
*Bishop of Chicago.*

GEORGE F. SEYMOUR,  
*Bishop of Springfield.*

HENRY C. POTTER,  
*Bishop of New York.*





## PASTORAL LETTER.

---

*To our well-beloved Clergy and Laity :*

We, your Bishops, having been assembled to take order, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, for the extension of the Kingdom of God, have availed ourselves of the opportunity to meet in Council to consider our duty in view of certain novel-  
ties of opinion and expression, which have seemed to us to be subversive of the fundamental verities of Christ's Religion. It has come to our knowledge that the minds of many of the faithful Clergy and Laity are disturbed and distressed by these things; and we desire to comfort them by a firm assurance that the Episcopate of the Church, to which, in a peculiar manner, the deposit of Faith has been entrusted, is not unfaithful to that sacred charge, but will guard and keep it with all diligence, as men who shall hereafter give account to God. In the discharge of that preëminently sacred obligation of our office, we find ourselves constrained to address you on two cardinal truths of our holy Religion, not for the purpose of vindicating them, nor even to make an exhaustive exposition of them; but simply and plainly to set before you the truth of God which every minister of this Church has pledged himself to hold, teach, and defend, and to hand on unimpaired to those who shall come after us. It is a conviction of solemn duty which constrains us thus to address you at this time, and particularly to state what the Church requires all who minister in holy things to hold and teach, first, concerning the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and secondly, concerning the Holy Scriptures, by sure and certain warrant of which the Catholic faith is proved.

## I. THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And first, touching the Incarnation, and the Person and Natures of our Blessed Lord, this Church teaches and requires her ministers to teach, (1) in the words of the Creed commonly called the Apostles' Creed, that Jesus Christ is the "Only Son" of God; in the words of the Creed commonly called the Nicene Creed, that Jesus Christ is the "Only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father"; in the words of the proper Preface for Trinity-Sunday, in the Order for the Holy Communion, that "that which we believe of the glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference or inequality"; and in the words of the second Article of Religion, that "the Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father," is "the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father"; (2) that this, the Second Person in the adorable Trinity, God from all eternity, was, in the words of the Creed commonly called the Apostles' Creed, "conceived by the Holy Ghost," and "born of the Virgin Mary"; in the words of the Creed commonly called the Nicene Creed, that He "came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man"; in the words of the *Te Deum*, that He did "humble" Himself "to be born of a Virgin"; in the words of the Collect for Christmas-day, that He "was born of a pure Virgin"; in the words of the proper Preface for Christmas-day, in the Order for the Holy Communion, that He was, "by the operation of the Holy Ghost, made very man, of the substance of the Virgin Mary His mother, and that without spot of sin"; and, in the words of the second Article of Religion, affirming the decrees of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, that He "took Man's nature in the



womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her substance; so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man."

This doctrine, held by the Church from the earliest ages as revealed and taught in Holy Scripture, witnessed to and defined against all attacks of error by the four great general Councils of the undivided Church, is held by this Church as the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. It has been well said that "this was the real contribution of the General Councils to human history: the more and more explicit reassertion of the Incarnation as a mystery indeed, but as a fact. The various heresies which attempted to make the Incarnation more intelligible, in reality explained it away; while Council after Council, though freely adopting new phraseology, never claimed to do more than give explicit expression to that which the Church from the beginning had implicitly believed. Their undoubted purpose, as viewed by themselves, was to define and guard, and to define only in order to guard, what they conceived to be the essence of Christianity." It is never to be forgotten that the doctrinal statements of the undivided Church are in no sense an enlargement of, or addition to, the domain of the Faith, but only a defence and definition of the same.

This is in strict accordance with the teaching of Holy Scripture. When the Apostle, writing to the Ephesians, would designate the final authority in matters of the Faith, he said, "Ye have not so learned Christ"; and when St. John wrote to the elect lady his burning appeal for steadfastness in the faith, he summed it up in these words: "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath the Father and the Son." It is not enough to learn *about* Christ; it is not enough to know what Christ taught or what is taught about Him; it is Christ that is to be learned; it is the Christ in whom we are to abide; Christ as revealed in Holy

Scripture; Christ as the fact of experience; Christ as the hinge of human history; Christ as the central and cardinal point of the Creed, which must be read backward and forward from Him: backward to reveal "God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," and forward to teach us and to give us "the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life everlasting."

Unless our Lord Jesus Christ is firmly held to be God's own true and proper Son, equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and to be also the true Son of the Blessed Virgin, by miraculous conception and birth, taking our very manhood of her substance, we sinners have no true and adequate Mediator; our nature has no restored union with God; we have no sacrifice for our sins in full atonement and propitiation, holy and acceptable to God; for our moral weakness and incapacity there is no fountain of cleansing, renewal, and re-creation after the measure and pattern of a perfect manhood. The assertion of the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation—the one indivisible Personality of the Son of God Incarnate, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us—is the antidote of the false teaching of our day, which is simply the revival of the old heresy of the self-perfectibility of man. For the miraculous Virgin-birth, while it is alone befitting to God, in assuming our nature into personal union with Himself, marks off and separates the whole of our humanity as tainted by that very corruption of original sin, which had no place in human nature as that nature was assumed by our Blessed Lord in His Incarnation.

We are moved to impress upon the minds of the people committed to our charge, and of the teachers commissioned by our authority to teach them, that these plain statements of Holy Scripture and of the authoritative Formularies of the Church re-

quire a plain and full acceptance of the facts that the human conception and birth of our Lord Jesus Christ was accomplished by the miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost, and that the Humanity in His one Person is wholly derived from the substance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, His mother. Only so could He be the "Seed of the woman" that was to bruise the serpent's head; only so could He fulfil the prophecies, "A woman shall compass a man," and "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son"; only so can the angelic annunciation be understood, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"; only thus can we accept the statement of St. Matthew, "She was found with child of the Holy Ghost," and the angel's assertion, recorded by the Evangelist, "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost"; only so can we grasp as it should be grasped the revelation in the Gospel according to St. John, "The Word was God; and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."

This true doctrine of the Incarnation is not only the cardinal and fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, but it includes and involves all of our Lord's redemptive work: His one Sacrifice for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; His resurrection from the dead; His Ascension into Heaven; His Intercession; and the glory of His eternal Kingdom. When the grace of God is poured into our hearts to know the Incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ, it leads us, by His Cross and Passion, to the glory of His resurrection.

Of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Church teaches, in the Creeds commonly called the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, that "the third day He rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures"; and in the fourth Article of Religion

that He "did truly rise again from death, and took again His body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature." The teaching of the New Testament gathers the whole fact and force of the apostolic evidence about this truth. The Apostles were ordained to be "witnesses of the Resurrection." By every test of enmity overcome, of unbelief converted, and of love and longing satisfied and convinced, Christ moves through the New Testament Scriptures, "the first-begotten of the dead," His voice, His wounds, His words, and His familiar ways all testifying to His identity: "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have"; "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep; after that, He was seen of James, then of all the Apostles; and last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

This Church nowhere teaches, and does not tolerate the teaching, that the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was a so-called spiritual resurrection, which took place when the vital union of His mortal body and His human soul was dissolved by death, and that the fleshly tabernacle saw corruption in the grave and was turned to dust. This would be to make the Resurrection take place from the Cross and not from the sepulchre. This would make void the purport and the power of the great argument of the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as to the eternal Priesthood of the risen and ascended Lord, Who "ever liveth to make intercession for us,"

Who "by His own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," and by the power of His prevailing intercession has given us "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh"; it would mar the Human Nature of Christ, and tend to the dividing of His one Person, or to the commingling of His two Natures; it would blot out the vision vouchsafed to the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, of the "Lamb as it had been slain," and it would silence the unceasing song of the redeemed: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

We have not undertaken to discuss these great doctrinal questions in detail; nor are we delivering our private and personal opinion on these vital subjects. We are speaking, not as truth-seekers, but as truth-receivers, "ambassadors in bonds"; even as St. Paul says, "That which we also received deliver we unto you." Our sole inquiry is: What does this Church teach? What is the declaration of God's Holy Word?

And here we rest; for the Priest's vow is to minister the Doctrine, as well as the Sacraments and the Discipline of Christ, "as this Church hath received the same," and because she hath received it "according to the commandments of God." And the true lover of God, the Theophilus, who would "know the certainty of those things" wherein he is instructed, who would have "a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us," must receive them as they "delivered them unto us which were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word."

It should be borne in mind by all — Bishops, Priests, Deacons, and Laymen — that the facts and truths which lie at the basis of the religion of Christ are eternal facts and eternal

truths, stamped with the assurance which Divine infallibility gives. A Revelation, the conditions of which should be pliable to the caprices of speculative thought, would be thereby voided of all that makes revelation final and sure. A Creed whose statements could be changed to accord with the shifting currents of opinion or sentiment, or with the trend of thought in each succeeding generation, would cease to command and guide the loyalty of the people, and would not be worthy of the respect of mankind. The Creeds of the Catholic Church do not represent the contemporaneous thought of any age; they declare eternal truths, telling what God has taught man and done for man, rather than what man has thought out for himself about God. They are voices from above, from Him "with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," and, as such, are entitled to our implicit faith. Grave peril to souls lies in the acceptance of the letter of the Creeds in any other than the plain and definitely historical sense in which they have been interpreted by the consentient voice of the Church in all ages. Fixedness of interpretation is of the essence of the Creeds, whether we view them as statements of facts, or as dogmatic truths founded upon and deduced from these facts and once for all determined by the operation of the Holy Ghost upon the mind of the Church. It were derogatory to the same Blessed Spirit to suggest that any other than the original sense of the Creeds may be lawfully held and taught. It becomes us, moreover, to consider that Christianity reconstructed as to its Faith must logically admit a reconstruction of the ethics, the spiritual life, the worship, the ministerial and sacramental agencies, and the good works which have ever been the benign products of the ancient truths. Such results we see in unhappy abundance all around us; and they do not encourage us to think that it is possible to improve the Christianity of our Lord and Saviour.



There is no Christ save the Christ of the Catholic Faith; and it is the blessing of this Christ, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," upon this Faith "once for all delivered to the Saints," which assures to the Church and the world all that ennobles, beautifies, and saves man.

## II. THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

There is a manifest analogy between the embodiment of the revealed Word of God in the terms of human thought and the tabernacling of the Personal Word of God in our flesh. Yet, at the threshold of our consideration of the Holy Scriptures, we are constrained to observe this plain and evident distinction: that while the Church, in her Creeds and Standards, has clearly and precisely defined not only the *fact*, but the *method*, of the Incarnation of Christ, she has confined herself to a positive assertion of the *fact* of the inspiration of Holy Scripture, without any definition of its *mode*, or the exposition of any theory concerning it. Nevertheless, the declaration of the fact of Inspiration is unequivocal. The Creed expressly declares that "the Holy Ghost spake by the Prophets"; the sixth Article of Religion teaches that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation"; the Declaration for Orders signed by every authorized teacher of the Church commands him to teach that "the Holy Scriptures *are* the Word of God"; and the ordination vows solemnly taken, in the presence of God and of His Church, by every Priest and Bishop, bind them to the statement that the same Scriptures "contain all Doctrine required as necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ."

Certain points must be first fixed in the consciousness of all reverent students of God's Holy Word. Concerning the Scriptures of the elder Covenant, our Lord authenticated the teaching of the ancient Church, to which "were committed the ora-

cles of God," by His public and official use of the Canon of the Old Testament Scriptures, as we know it to have been read in the Synagogue worship of the Jews of His time. Nor may we forget that He Himself, *after His Resurrection*, declared that these Scriptures testified of Him, specifying them in detail to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, when, "beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself," and more fully still, when standing with the assembled Apostles He said, "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me."

The Scriptures of the New Covenant contain equally strong and clear statements of the Inspiration of the whole Canon; as when St. Paul says, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning"; and St. Peter, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved [borne on] by the Holy Ghost"; and again St. Paul, with direct reference to the Scriptures of the New Covenant, declares in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, "Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing [combining] spiritual things with spiritual." This is but the realization of our Lord's promise, from which all examination of the meaning of the peculiar and unique Inspiration of the writers of the New Testament Scriptures ought to begin. It is the men who are inspired, and not primarily the book; and it was to the men that our Lord gave the promise and assurance of Inspiration, when He said: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"; "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth"; "He shall

glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." Thus we may have full assurance that the Faith which was taught by the preaching, has been preserved in the writings, of men to whom, "through the Holy Ghost," Christ gave commandment that they should "teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever" He had commanded, and to whom the *authority* committed on the day of the Ascension was confirmed and quickened into active exercise by the *power* given on the day of Pentecost, when "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

Meanwhile, it has not been left to modern criticism to discover that God's revelation of Himself to man was a progressive revelation, until "in these last days He hath spoken unto us by His Son," Who is "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person"; so that the Revelation thus made is the final revelation of God to Man. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us that "God spake unto the fathers in many portions," never at any one time communicating to them the whole truth, but revealing it in parts, as they were able to bear it. The same authority declares that "God spake to the fathers in many fashions," sometimes in dreams and visions of the night, while at other times the Word of God came to the Prophet with such distinctness that he could preface his message with the sacramental words, "Thus saith the Lord"; and while the Catholic symbol of the faith declares that the Holy Ghost "spake *through* the Prophets," the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that "God spake unto the fathers *in* the Prophets."

Hence, the minute and reverent study of the Divine Word must always be necessary, and will always be profitable. The time will never come when men will not be obliged to combine the separate portions of God's Word, to study the fashions in

which they were given, and to consider the operation of the Holy Ghost both in and through the sacred writers. And the time will never come when the honest student of God's Word will not require and will not welcome every critical appliance which the Providence of God may furnish, to cast a new light upon the sacred page.

It would be faithless to think that the Christian religion has anything to fear from the critical study of the Holy Scriptures. "The Church of the present and of the coming day is bringing her sheaves home with her from the once faithlessly dreaded harvests of criticism." We devoutly thank God for the light and truth which have come to us, through the earnest labors of devout critics of the sacred text. What we deprecate and rebuke is the irreverent rashness and unscientific method of many professed critics, and the presumptuous superciliousness with which they vaunt erroneous theories of the day as established results of criticism. From this fault professedly Christian critics are unfortunately not always exempt; and by Christian critics we mean those who, both by theory and practice, recognize the Inspiration of God as the controlling element of Holy Scripture.

The same Spirit Who "in time past spake to the fathers by the Prophets" still speaks to us in the sacred page. He who heeds what God has thus revealed will be made "wise unto salvation." To him who heeds it not, though he be the greatest of all critics, the Scripture is a sealed book. The true corrective of the unrest of our day will be found in the devout use of the Holy Scriptures. If any man will search them as our Lord commanded, they will testify of Him. If any man will study them "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," he will not be disappointed; whatever may be the value of critical study, and however thankful we may be for the fact that no discovery of modern research, positively ascer-

tained, is of a character to unsettle a Christian's faith in any particular, we must remember that the chief duty of every student, and especially of every teacher, is to learn what the Scripture says and what it means, so that he may be able faithfully to open the same Scripture to the help and healing of sinful man. Any instruction or any study which makes any part of the Bible less authoritative than it really is, which weakens faith in its Inspiration, which tends to eliminate Christ from the utterances of the Prophets, or which leads a man to think of miracles with a half-suppressed skepticism, is a pernicious instruction and a pernicious study. A great danger may beset the flock of Christ, not merely from false teaching, but through injudicious and ill-timed teaching, the effect of which is not to settle and confirm, but to undermine and weaken faith. This danger exists, and, unless it shall be conscientiously avoided by every teacher of the Church, the coming generations may live to see "a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."

The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures is a postulate of faith, not a corollary of criticism. It cannot lawfully be questioned by any Christian man, and least of all by men who have sealed their conviction of the certainty of the faith with the solemn vows of Ordination. Outside of the domain of faith, there may be undetermined questions touching matters which, to some minds, may seem to be almost essential to the integrity of the Christian scheme, but which cannot be necessary to salvation. In this border-land, thinking minds will appreciate and reverently and conscientiously use the freedom which is accorded to them; but they will not carry their liberty over into the realm of adjudicated truth. Their obligations to God, as men and as priests, bind them in a holy and blessed servitude to the truth; and a consciousness of their own honest loyalty is essential to their self-respect.

Under the instruction of their Divine Master, the first ambassadors of Christ knew how fruitless even a high degree of evangelic activity must be without unflinching loyalty to a body of Doctrine once for all delivered and received. In the ages all along, since the first Council was held in Jerusalem, the safety and honor of the Church have been endangered as much by the inroads of disbelief in revelation, and by lax constructions of creeds and oaths of allegiance, as by the idolatry of the East, or the barbarism of the West.

Not less plain is this condition, and not less sharp is the test of obedience, in this land and at this time, in the matter of the Church's formularies of worship. Seductions to lawlessness abounding in a civilization showy rather than strong, in communities of eager enterprise, intellectual pride, social agitation, and vast material opportunities, lay upon the Church a solemn obligation to abide steadfastly in the unchanging principles of her commission and her confessions, and in the dignity and simplicity of her acknowledged offices and standards; not forgetting that spiritual life must decay, not only when pledges are emptied of their meaning, but when formularies are maimed of their integrity. No specious plea of progress, liberty, independence, or comprehension can weaken in the least the constraining obligation of a covenant of conformity. A heresy which would seek at the Altar protection from the penalty of a violated vow forfeits the respect and tenderness due to honest doubt. We therefore earnestly entreat you, dear Brethren of the Clergy, that you "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free," that you "declare the whole counsel of God," as this Church hath received the same, that you exercise discipline without fear, "not handling the Word of God deceitfully," "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience," and "by manifestation of the truth commending yourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."



So exhorting you, dearly beloved in the Lord, and beseeching the Father of mercies to "stablish, strengthen, and settle" you and the flocks intrusted to our care, we "commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."







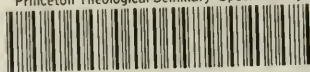
PHOTOMOUNT  
PAMPHLET BINDER



*Manufactured by*  
GAYLORD BROS. Inc.  
Syracuse, N. Y.  
Stockton, Calif.

BX5837 .A2 1894  
Pastoral letter of the bishops to the

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00047 2631